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Case for a Regional Approach to the Regulation of Cross Border Higher Education with Specific Reference to East Africa

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Abstract. Cross border higher education, which involves the movement of higher education students, lecturers and study programmes across national boundaries is one of the fastest growing elements of higher education today. This paper notes that in as much as this movement is presenting the students, lecturers, higher education institutions and nations with a range of benefits and opportunities, it also threatens the quality of higher education in a number of ways. The paper argues that national higher education quality regulatory agencies and frameworks may not be adequate to regulate cross border higher education, given its multinational character. Therefore, the paper argues for a regional approach to the regulation of cross border education. Thereafter, it discusses some of the prospects for and constraints impeding realization of this regional approach.

Keywords: Cross border education, Regional quality assurance, East Africa

1 Introduction

The 21st century is characterised by a remarkable rise in the number of cross border students and study programmes (Moore & Lambert, 1996). Electronic delivery of education programmes has become widespread in many parts of world and there is a steady increase in the number of cross border providers of higher education programmes (OECD, 2004a). Massification of higher education has constrained many nations' capacity to provide access to higher education using conventional modes of delivery and there is an increasing number of students following study programmes that are produced and managed outside the countries where they are offered. These developments in the higher education sector have brought several opportunities. The *exporting* institutions and nations gain from expanding student enrolment and income through tuition fees while the *importing* nations benefit by supplementing the

domestic supply of higher education (Sum, 2005). However, the developments have also posed challenges for quality assurance. For instance, significant concerns relate to the question of who awards the course credits or ultimate credential for the mobile programme and the question of whether the qualification is recognised for employment and/ or further study beyond the awarding institution/ country. Incidentally, in many countries, higher education quality regulatory agencies are budding and lack the ability to effectively regulate the quality of cross border education.

Subsequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) and nations are devising innovative systems of distance education delivery and strengthening their collaborations with other institutions and nations in the areas of quality assurance and accreditation. This study undertook to: 1) highlight the main universal indicators used in quality assurance of distance higher education in East Africa; 2) describe the rationale for regional quality assurance collaboration; and 3) reveal the possible drawbacks for the effective implementation of regional collaboration in quality assurance for distance higher education in East Africa.

1.1   Concept of Quality in Education

Quality of education is relative and varies from one education system to another and it is subjective. It varies with time and societal expectations. Thus, it cannot be entirely divorced from the objectives of education in any particular country (Oguntimehin & Adeyemi, 2012). Similarly, it is declared in "Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education in Africa" (nd), the Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) (2008), in its *Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* and elsewhere that quality of education has been defined differently by different stakeholders and different countries may even define this concept differently. The academic staff, students, employers, government, and the society at large may have conflicting definitions of the term *quality*. The British Standard Institution (BSI) defines quality as the "totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs" (as cited in Mishra, 2006:11). Therefore, there is a quality of input, quality of processes, and quality of output (IUCEA, 2008).

1.2   Concept of Distance Education

Although there are many ways of defining *distance education*, in this paper it will refer to an organised, instructional delivery system that connects learners, regardless of their spatial and temporal location, with instructors and other educational resources. As distance learning generally occurs in a different place

from the teaching, it requires special techniques of course design, instructional design, and communication. Distance education uses technology to improve interaction and minimise separateness. On the other hand, *e-Learning,* a rapidly growing integral component of distance learning, refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values through a broad range of electronically distributed teaching and learning materials. E-learning applications and processes include: web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities, and digital collaboration. Subject matter is delivered via the Internet, intranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video, and audio.

Besides the distance education programmes and courses being offered by many higher education institutions practising the dual mode of delivery in East Africa, there are higher education institutions dedicated to offering distance education.

1.3 Quality Assurance and Related Concepts

Quality assurance is a combination of planned and systematic activities implemented in an education system so that quality requirements for education will be fulfilled as compared with some acceptable standards. It may take or involve various forms such as accreditation, assessment and academic review, and auditing. *Accreditation* is an evaluation of whether a programme or an institution meets acceptable standards and qualifies for a certain status (Kis, 2005). In East Africa, the term accreditation is sometimes used to refer to public universities that were established by acts of Parliament, by statute, or by decree. They are accredited (by law) but not as the result of peer review, a site visit, and a report assessing the institution. Whereas *assessment* is an evaluation that makes graded judgments about quality and goes beyond accreditation which, according to Dill (as cited in Kis, 2005), makes a binary judgment. This type of quality assurance is an institutional academic review, a diagnostic self-assessment and evaluation of teaching, learning, and its related activities. *Auditing* checks the extent to which an institution is achieving its own explicit or implicit objectives as weighed against its own standards and goals. *Quality control* is concerned with checking whether the produced products or offered services meet the set standards. Quality is checked usually at the end of the production procedure and someone from outside the institution carries out this task. This approach in higher education is disputed due to the fact that everyone who is working for the institution is held responsible for the quality of the institution. While quality assurance focuses on improvement aspects, quality control has a notion of accountability.

1.4 Distance Higher Education Quality Assurance in Africa

Almost all of the quality assurance agencies operating in Africa have responsibilities to distance and e-learning. On the whole, however, very little quality assurance work has been done on either distance or e-learning in Africa. South Africa has a relatively long history of distance learning institutions with both the University of South Africa and Technikon South Africa having large student bodies and relatively long histories of operation. The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) works across the whole field of education, ranging from Early Child Education and Development to tertiary education and training, and is guided by the key principle of quality provision of education as an important condition for enhancing the socio-economic well-being for the majority of society.

Africa began to observe the development and implementation of quality assurance and accreditation policies for distance education, which are clearly different from those for on- campus education, less than a decade ago. The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) was formally launched in January 2004 (http://www.acde-africa.org/). It is a unifying body of distance education providers and practitioners in Africa consisting of African universities and other higher education institutions which are committed to expanding access to quality education and training through open and distance learning. In August 2008 it was agreed that the ACDE Technical Committee on Quality Assurance and Accreditation be renamed Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency. The establishment of QAAA focused on the need to ensure that open and distance learning institutions in Africa engage in acceptable quality assurance practices through consultation, partnership, and collaboration in distance education approaches (http://www.nou.edu.ng/noun/acde-qaaa/index.htm).

Whereas all of the quality assurance agencies in Africa are linked in some way to the government (as parts of a ministry of education or a semi-autonomous unit), the idea of non-governmental accreditation is seen as important in other countries elsewhere in the world. This was also part of the original plan for South Africa. Accreditation by autonomous, non-governmental quality assurance agencies is a tradition in some parts of the world, especially the United States of America. In such cases, the work of accrediting agencies is usually recognised by the government and accreditation is often seen as a condition for receiving government funding.

1.5 Background to Higher Education Quality Assurance in East Africa

Apparently, each university in East Africa has some sort of quality assurance mechanism in the form of regulations and criteria regarding academic staff

recruitment and appraisal, rules and regulations on academic activity performance, student evaluations of course delivery, stakeholder involvement in the curriculum review process, external examination systems, and academic auditing as conducted by some universities (Nkunya, 2008). Individual universities having their quality assurance mechanisms notwithstanding, there are national educational quality assurance agencies for each country.

At the university level, the first accreditation agency in Africa was established in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in 1985 by an Act of Parliament, the Universities Act Cap 210B. The CHE was set up because of general concerns about the quality of higher education and the existence of several institutions offering "university education whose establishment and development was uncoordinated and unregulated . . ." (Hayward, 2006). Among its functions were accreditation and inspection of institutions of higher education. Standards for accreditation were established in 1989 as were rules for establishing new universities. The actual accreditation process began in 1989 in Kenya only for private universities. Among the first to be accredited was the Catholic University of East Africa. Accreditation in Kenya is now required of private universities, public universities other than those established by an Act of Parliament, foreign universities, and any other agency operating on behalf of any of those institutions. The Commission for Higher Education is concerned with quality assurance of both conventional and distance higher education in Kenya.

In Tanzania, the Higher Education Accreditation Council which had been in operation since 1995 was then succeeded by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) beginning on July 1, 2005. Previously, all universities and non-university higher education institutions implemented their obligatory functions as set forth in their individual Acts of Parliament or constitutions including the development of internal quality assurance systems. Thus, TCU is a corporate body mandated to recognise, approve, register, and accredit universities and university colleges (both conventional and distance modes of delivery) operating in Tanzania and local or foreign university-level programmes being offered by non-TCU registered higher education institutions (TCU, 2010). This commission also coordinates the proper functioning of all university institutions in Tanzania so as to foster a harmonised higher education system in the country. In order to ensure that such a harmonious higher education system does not compromise institutional peculiarities and autonomy, each university has the legal right to operate under its own Charter.

Uganda, having realised the truth that global forces are transforming the way higher education is being delivered, sought to set up a regulatory body for higher education. Thus, to regulate higher education and guide the establishment of institutions of higher learning as well as ensure that quality and relevant education is delivered, the National Council for Higher Education

was established in 2005 by an Act of Parliament (National Council for Higher Education, 2007; 2008). This is a semi-autonomous and self-accounting body. The core mission of this agency is to set standards and regulations to ensure that all public and private tertiary education institutions in Uganda create, sustain, and provide relevant and quality higher education for all qualified Ugandans and to meet the local, national, and global higher education challenges of the future.

2 Methodology

Although the East African Community (EAC) consists of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, East Africa in this paper refers to Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda which are the original countries of the EAC. Indisputably, these three countries have the most well-established and coordinated higher education systems within the Community. This study provides findings drawn predominantly from the qualitative content analysis of data from both primary and secondary documents and records belonging to the quality assurance agencies for higher education in the three countries: the Commission for Higher Education, Tanzania Commission for Universities, and National Council for Higher Education for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, respectively. The documents and records for the Inter-University Council of East Africa were also deemed vital to supplement and triangulate the data collected from the individual countries.

According to Barbara & Wildemuth (nd), qualitative content analysis is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. This approach was regarded as genuine and relevant for this study because this study intended to produce an interpretive paradigm from the available authentic documents and records pertaining to quality assurance in higher education in East Africa.

In addition, analysis of literature from some research papers, articles, and textbooks related to quality assurance of higher education in Africa, particularly in East Africa, was conducted to extract information applicable to the present study. Selection of these documents was primarily based on these factors: the internal and external coherence to the study, correspondence between theory and data, the fruitfulness of the data, and the trustworthiness of the sources for professional credibility (Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, 2003: 283). Data obtained from all sources was sorted into categories and interpreted by focusing on the three objectives of this study.

3   Quality Assurance in Distance Education

3.1   Approaches to Quality Assurance in Distance Education

Governments in East Africa advocate for more institutions to adopt distance education methods, seek new markets, and offer more of their courses online. (Jung, Wong, Li, Baigaltugs, & Belawati, 2011) suggest that this is the trend in Asia and elsewhere too. However, the most challenging issue facing institutions and nations is how to assure and improve quality while at the same time widening access and reducing costs. Writing about quality assurance of higher education in Europe, Robinson (nd) alleges that open and distance learning (ODL) has faced an ongoing struggle to establish its credibility, legitimacy, and equivalence to conventional provisions, even when its quality is good. Its success in achieving these has varied among countries and institutions. Uncertainty has revolved around whether ODL programmes should have separate quality assurance requirements or the same as those for conventional campus-based programmes and whether they should be generic or specific, mandatory or optional. Nations having formal mechanisms for higher distance education may be following one of the categories of approaches as described hereunder:

1. Integrated approach. Quality assurance of distance education as an integral part of the entire higher education delivery system. Thus, the same procedures and criteria are applied to both distance and conventional education systems. Tanzania and Uganda fall under this category. This approach is seen in countries such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka (Jung, *et al.*, 2011).

2. Differentiated approach. Quality assurance of distance education as a distinctive mode of delivery. The fact that distance education has some unique features as contrasted with conventional education is underscored to establish a separate quality assurance mechanism and/or separate criteria for assessment. In East Africa, though not very explicitly, Kenya follows this approach. The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) of Kenya stipulates procedures and criteria for assessment of ODL (CHE, 2008: 75-95). Asian countries which employ this model include India and Korea.

Any approach adopted for quality assurance of distance education definitely has not only strengths but weaknesses too. Nevertheless, the most crucial point is that each approach bears a very close resemblance to the others in terms of quality assurance and recognition of the programmes. The ACDE's decision to establish QAAA as already stated in this paper, is most likely an outcome of thinking in line with the above approaches. Certainly, the long term ramification of this noble decision is subject to debate.

3.2   Criteria for Quality Assessment of Distance Higher Education

The content analysis of the criteria for quality assurance as stipulated by the Tanzania Commission for Universities, the Commission for Higher Education of Kenya, and the National Council for Higher Education of Uganda discloses that their standards and criteria have a lot in common. Additionally, when we analyse the standards and criteria from other countries and institutions around the world we realise that they all basically cover the same key aspects. The present study compared standards and criteria from a wide range of literature obtained from Asia, Africa, and Europe and from reputable international organisations such as the Commonwealth of Learning, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Jung *et al.* (2011), COL (2009) and Hayward (2006) note that, in general, quality assurance systems and criteria for distance education evaluation focus on assessing input, process, and output variables. These include: institutional vision, mission, goals, and core values; institutional management, organisational culture, and leadership; human resource development as it supports academic excellence; stability and management of financial resources; ICT and library systems; curriculum design, implementation and development); learner assessment and evaluation; learner support programmes; internal quality assurance mechanisms; and research, consultancy and extension services.

Table 1: Quality Assurance Standards and Criteria for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

Kenya	Tanzania	Uganda
A. Institutional Standards		
Mission & vision	Objectives, mission & vision	Objectives, mission & vision
Institutional governance	Institutional governance	Institutional governance
Academic character	Academic orientation	Academic orientation
Academic programmes	Curriculum offered	Quality of pedagogy
Human resources	Academic staff	Academic freedom
Library services	Facilities	Facilities
Financial resources	Finances and budgeting	Financial management
Schedule planning	Strategic planning	Strategic plan
B. Programme/Curriculum Standards		
Qualified staff	Qualified staff	Qualified staff
Academic resources	Academic resources	Academic resources
Admission of students	Admission of students	Admission of students
Size of the programme	Duration of the programme	Duration of the programme
Content of the programme	Content of the programme	Content of the programme
Programme assessment	Programme assessment	Programme assessment
Evaluation of teaching	Quality control systems	Quality control systems

Source: Compiled from CHE (2008), NCHE (2008) & IUCEA (2010)

Table 1 clearly indicates that despite the differences in wording in some cases, the higher education quality assurance agencies in these three countries insist on the same key standards and indicators for quality assurance. However, there are few criteria which seem to be unique to each agency. For instance, while the NCHE of Uganda specifies physical resources, the CHE and TCU stipulate facilities in general and TCU adds the campus size as a separate issue. Moreover, NCHE lists goals and aims of the programme as a crucial indicator whereas CHE and TCU do not specify it at all. Interestingly, CHE requires institutions to consider the quality of output and quality of research and publications as important standards. It is natural to understand that the quality of output by itself consists of a host of issues.

4   Rationale for Regional Collaboration in Quality Assurance

There is ample evidence that provisions of distance higher education inevitably entail both intra-national and either regional or international collaborative efforts. That is one reason for the involvement of reputable regional and international organisations such as the South African Development Community (SADC), Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Bank (WB), and World Trade Organization (WTO) in the quality assurance of ODL. Moreover, regional distance education organisations such as: the African Council for Distance Education-Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (ACDE-QAAA), European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), and United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) have been formed for the same purpose.

It has already been declared in this paper that the present era is typically characterised by international educational mobility including cross-border, e-learning programmes, which are certainly important features of contemporary distance education. Presently, one can easily identify the physical or virtual movement of education courses and programmes across national borders through the implementation of face to face, distance, or a combination of these modes. Credits towards a qualification may be awarded by the sending foreign country or institution, an affiliated domestic partner, or jointly (Knight, 2007).

4.1   The Rationale for Regional Collaboration in Quality Assurance

The justification for regional collaboration on quality assurance for distance higher education is chiefly anchored on the perceived responses to the basic question: *Do individual institutions and nations have the capability to establish*

and manage quality assurance for both incoming and outgoing education programmes? Generally, the diversity and complexity of education mobility (Knight, nd.) suggest a necessity for mutual quality assurance and recognition mechanisms between and among nations.

4.2   Academic Factors

The changing educational paradigms in higher education are such that distance education is rapidly gaining recognition as the most viable option for widening access to higher education opportunities at a relatively low cost without jeopardising its quality. Moore & Lambert (1996) state that, through the sharing of materials, facilities and approaches, collaboration facilitates improvement of the quality of learning materials. Further, through mutual quality assurance institutions and nations open educational opportunities to a broader population of learners than are conventionally served and testify to the assurance of the recognition of the programmes (Moore & Lambert, 1996).

Risks and benefits for collaboration vary between sending and receiving countries, between developed and developing countries, and students, yet Gupta (2007) adds that mutual implementation of quality assurance strategies minimises the imbalance between brain drain and brain gain, exposes students to the latest educational technology and practical insights and hence, intellectual enrichment, broadening of cultural viewpoints, and forging of meaningful international bonds. The fact that East African countries are more or less the same in terms of economic, social, and cultural levels and standards makes it possible for them to collaborate mutually and reap similarly from their collaboration.

4.3   Economic Factors

Globalisation is one of the reasons for which collaboration in quality assurance is increasingly becoming a necessity for institutions of higher education involved in distance education provisions. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are outstandingly breaking territorial boundaries that have tended to characterise institutional education. It appears that institutions which desire to become or remain competitive in the global economy should consider regional and international partnership as a means toward gaining financial power. Maviiri (nd.) suggests that even when a cross-border educational activity is considered to be non-commercial in purpose, there is still export value in the country's balance of payments in some ways. And this will largely depend on the country's own strategies to reaping benefits from the beneficiaries. There is, however, a precaution pertinent to economic motives of collaboration. The struggle for survival tends to naturally lead higher education

institutions into corporate institutions. The consequence of which is the likelihood of diverting from the institutional core mission, vision, and goals.

4.4   Political Factors

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation, especially at the national level, tends to have political motives as well. For instance, nations may agree to establish international collaboration with the main objective of reducing trade barriers and increasing economic activity among themselves (Moore & Lambert, 1996). Moreover, fighting unemployment and building significant and accelerating development in relatively less developed countries by enhancing the wealth and quality of educational resources available are possible effects. Mutual partnership can thus be functional in managing globalisation and enhancing human capital within the East African region.

4.5   Ideological Factors

The core philosophy underlying the provision of distance education is the concept of opening up universal access to educational opportunities and resources, especially to less privileged individuals and segments of society. This is otherwise known as the democratisation of education. Trindade (as cited in Moore & Lambert, 1996)observes that distance education institutions tend to be pragmatic in their approach to inter-institutional cooperation and show a greater willingness to take risks to promote international collaboration and are open to modern approaches of delivery brought by rapidly changing ICTs. The same philosophy compels higher education institutions providing distance learning opportunities in East Africa to collaborate.

5   Constraints to Regional Approach to Cross Border Quality Assurance

Despite the strengths of mutual collaboration for quality assurance of education, the establishment and management of effective recognition and accrediting mechanisms or agencies is not an easy undertaking. Common drawbacks include:
1. Differences in general education systems and national educational philosophies. For example Tanzania and Uganda follow a 7-4-2-3 system in which there are 7 years of primary education, 6 years of secondary education (divided into 4 years of ordinary or lower secondary and 2 years of advanced or upper secondary school), and at least 3 years for higher education, whereas Kenya follows an 8-4-4 system, that is 8 years of

primary, 4 years of secondary and at least 4 years of higher education. These differences have a direct repercussion on student exchange between these countries. In some cases students are compelled to do either a bridging programme or a matriculation examination before they are admitted for university studies in a neighbouring country (Maviiri, nd.). Under these circumstances, quality of education may mean different things to different institutions and partner countries.

2. The incongruity of national quality assurance systems among themselves on one hand and the regional (IUCEA) quality assurance system on the other. For instance, Kenya's CHE quite clearly explicates the standards (provider's commitment, design of curriculum, instruction, and course materials, development, staff support, student support, evaluation and assessment, and advertising) and procedures for quality assurance of ODL programmes (CHE, 2008: 75-95) while Tanzania's TCU and Uganda's NCHE are silent about ODL programmes. Of course, the standards and procedures for ODL quality assurance in TCU and NCHE are implied and they follow the same procedures and standards as conventional programmes. Moreover, the emphasis placed on private university quality assurance is not necessarily the same across these countries.

3. Autonomy and the powers of national accrediting agencies are not uniform across these countries. There is a notable proximity between universities and national structures of power which in East African situations has tended to curtail academic freedom and consequently, intellectual expansion among students and staff. For example, it is noted that there have been reported cases of serious government encroachment on university recruitment and contract renewal of professors, university budgets, and institutions' procedures in general. Equally, the regional accrediting agencies such as IUCEA may face a dilemma when it comes to executing its duties to member institutions or countries. For instance, there are cases in which regional agencies are questioned about their power to sanction or terminate membership of institutions and countries which fail to reach some acceptable standards (Hayward, 2006).

4. Cheating and unreliability of data about programmes and institutional activities among member institutions. Sum (2005) implies that there may be a tendency of providing exaggerated information regarding, for example, course/programme content and their delivery and claims relating to the local recognition of the course/programme. Arguably, the ranking system of universities and advocacy for global competition are among the accelerating factors for the provision of exaggerated data.

5. Distance education and higher education in general are at different levels of development among member institutions and nations in East Africa. Institutions may be reluctant to engage in regional efforts for quality

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assurance of distance higher education due to the uncertainty of partnering with members who are at different levels of progress. In this regard, Tanzania has a comparatively well-developed single mode of distance education delivery apart from the dual mode which its partner countries have too. There is also an absence of consensus on what exactly constitutes higher education.

6. The proliferation of private and public higher education institutions as a result of liberalisation policies of education. Almost all nations are witnessing a rapid increase in the number of universities and conversion of existing colleges into universities. Some of these institutions are ostensibly not worth of the name 'university.' Again, what is the authority of regional quality assurance agencies such as IUCEA over such institutions? The problem of 'degree mills' has become a critical concern of both local and regional education quality assurance agencies.

7. Governments' reduced capacity in funding higher education programmes including quality assurance systems. Inadequacy of funding hampers the cultivation of a quality assurance culture at the institutional level and at national levels.

Other drawbacks of effective realisation of regional collaboration in distance higher education are: absence of comparable regional standards and mechanisms for regulating all types of cross-border education, the massification of students in higher education surpasses infrastructure hence causing further jeopardy to the quality of educational programmes and students, and the inadequacy of human capacity which could effectively influence quality assurance culture in the academic system.

6   Conclusions and Implications

The contemporary global tendency of students and educational programme mobility, mostly at the higher education level, signifies the reality that the provision of distance education programmes is increasingly becoming an imperative option among nations and higher education institutions. As a result, quality assurance of distance higher education becomes an area of great concern. The central argument of this paper is that even in the era of globalisation and internationalisation of education, the main focus of quality assurance of distance higher education should be at the regional level (such as East Africa) due to the fact that distance education crosses borders so easily especially in the form of e-learning. This emphasizes *regionalisation* rather than internationalisation. This remains valid despite the fact that each nation

has the right to be concerned with their priorities. However, member countries ought to realise that even if they have many commonalities, the specific purpose of their higher education and quality assurance systems, policy frameworks, approaches, and instruments are tailored to each country's circumstances.

By and large, quality assurance in distance higher education is still in its infancy in this region. Countries should consider distance education as an integral part of a broader national and regional education development agenda. Regional collaboration in the provision and assurance of higher education is ostensibly imperative. That being said, there still remains the perplexing paradox of whether we ought to advocate for the partnership and collaboration of institutions and countries or a partnership for competition.

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